

CENTRAL BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT
FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS

Tuesday, May 15, 2018
Area Agency on Aging building, 524 Garrison Avenue
Fort Smith, Arkansas
7th Floor Board Room

Meeting Minutes

The Fort Smith Central Business Improvement District Commission's regular meeting was scheduled for 9:30 a.m. on Tuesday, May 15, 2018 in the 7th floor board room of the Area Agency on Aging building, 524 Garrison Avenue, Fort Smith, Arkansas.

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Richard Griffin, Chairperson, at 9:36 a.m. and a quorum was noted present. Also in attendance were commissioners Phil White, Lee Ann Vick, Steve Clark, Sam Sicard, Rodney Ghan and Jeff Pryor. Commissioner Bill Hanna was absent. Others in attendance included Wally Bailey and Jeff Dingman of the City of Fort Smith.

Mr. Griffin sought consent to adjust the agenda so that the nomination and election of a new Chair for the CBID Commission would occur toward the end of the meeting. There was no objection.

Mr. Ghan moved approval of the minutes of the March 13, 2018 regular meeting. Mr. Sicard seconded, and the motion carried by unanimous vote.

The commissioners considered the Treasurer's report for the month of April 2018, such documents being previously provided by Mr. Sicard for the commissioners' review. As of April 30, 2018, the Total Cash-on-Hand for the CBID amounted to \$91,575.86. Restricted funds comprise \$23,439.90 of the total cash. The total cash net of restricted funds amounted to \$68,135.96. Mr. Ghan moved to accept the Treasurer's Report. Mr. Clark seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

The Commission reviewed the Neighborhood Services report, CBID Business License Report, and Open Permit reports regarding activity in the CBID through the month of April. There were no questions of staff.

Mr. White expressed an interest in moving the discussion of the Park at West End's 2017 operating report to the next meeting. Mr. Ghan moved that the discussion be placed on the agenda for the June 19, 2018 meeting. Mr. Pryor seconded, and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Griffin asked Mr. Bailey, Director of Development Services for the City of Fort Smith, to provide an update on the Form Based Code project, which will amend the city's zoning regulations as applied to the downtown district and recommended by the Propelling Downtown Forward plan adopted in 2017. Mr. Bailey relayed that the city contracted with Gateway Planning to conduct initial meetings with stakeholders, which were conducted in late March, and then create a draft document for staff review and then forwarding to the public for comment. City staff and Gateway personnel will work the draft through public stakeholder meetings and public comment periods. Any needed revisions to the draft document will be made and presented back to the City by mid-July, so that the Planning Commission and Board of Directors might consider adoption of the Form Based Code zoning regulations by late July or early August. Mr. Griffin confirmed with Mr. Bailey that the estimated time frame for completing the process is to be late July or early August, and also that the

changes would be by ordinance to establish new regulations, not merely guidelines. Mr. Bailey confirmed, and further explained that a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) sheet has been produced and will be placed on the City's website for the public to review and download. Those who visit the website also have access to the Propelling Downtown Forward plan and the Future Fort Smith comprehensive plan. Mr. Bailey confirmed that when all information related to the Form Based Code project is available on the website, staff will notify the public of its availability.

At Mr. Griffin's invitation, Mitch Minnick, Director of the Fort Smith Housing Authority, addressed a recent housing project that required five separate applications to the Planning Commission for consideration, of which three were defeated and the housing project could not move forward. He believes the application of the Form Based Code process instead of the traditional zoning process focused on permitted & allowable uses would have aided in the understanding and ultimate completion of the project.

Mr. Griffin asked Mr. Ghan for an update on the Downtown Traffic Study project, as Mr. Ghan, along with Mr. Hanna, sit on the review committee for selection of the consultant to conduct the study. Mr. Ghan in turn introduced Reece Brewer, the Transportation Director for the Frontier Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), who is facilitating this process for the city. Ms. Brewer relayed that in addition to Mr. Ghan and Mr. Hanna, Mr. Dingman as well as City Administrator Carl Geffken and the city's Director of Engineering Stan Snodgrass have reviewed submittals garnered from a Request for Proposal process in order to select a consultant to perform the traffic study. A contract is being negotiated with a qualified professional services provider to refine the scope and related cost. Once that is complete, an agreement will be finalized and presented to the city for approval. However, there remains a budgetary issue, as the negotiated price is still likely to be more than the \$100,000 that the city has allocated for this project. This is an opportunity for other community partners interested in the study to participate, or the city will have to find additional funds.

Once that matter is resolved, the contract can be presented to the Board of Directors for approval. Mr. White asked the timing to conduct the study once the contract is approved, to which Ms. Brewer replied it is likely to be at least six months. Some lamented this timeframe, but Ms. Brewer noted it is a quick work period for a traffic study of this type. Mr. Ghan reiterated that this is a comprehensive traffic study focusing on walkability and the overall movement of all cars and traffic as related to the elements identified in the Propelling Downtown Forward plan. Although truck traffic is a part of the study, this is not a study focused only on finding alternatives for downtown truck traffic. Mr. Sicard reiterated that his interests include addressing speeding and red-light infractions, as they create a hazardous situation for pedestrians, as some of his employees have been hit while crossing the street. This project is intended to collect and analyze data on all traffic & mobility issues downtown, and present alternatives for consideration. Implementation of any of the suggested alternatives will be a different project altogether.

The CBID Commission considered a demolition request for a structure at 620 Towson Avenue. Mr. Griffin excused himself as chair and did not participate in the discussion or vote due to a personal conflict of interest. At Mr. White's request, Ms. Jana Mundy, agent for the property owner RBG Family Limited Partnership, LLP, presented the request to demolish the tin and wood-frame building situated behind the Sparks Clinic at 624 Towson. The building has a Towson address, but does not have actual frontage on Towson Avenue. Mr. Ghan asked if there was any specific plan for landscaping on the property after the building's removal. Ms. Mundy replied that there was not. Mr. Clark moved approval of the demolition permit. Mr. Sicard seconded, and the motion carried with six in favor, zero opposed, and Mr. Griffin abstaining.

Mr. Griffin resumed the chair, and asked Mr. Sicard to discuss the recent declaration of the census tract containing the downtown district as an "Economic Opportunity Zone" by Governor Asa Hutchinson. Mr. Sicard explained that this is an effort to make depressed census tracts more attractive to potential investors for redevelopment by allowing favorable tax incentives for capital gains from the sale or exchange of qualifying investments in those census tracts for at least ten years. Mr. Ghan added that out of six census tracts submitted to the Governor for consideration within the City of Fort Smith, three were selected including the one that includes the downtown district. Mr. Sicard asked if a more comprehensive presentation could be scheduled for a future CBID meeting from someone who could better explain the details. Mr. Dingman noted the request.

Mr. Griffin asked Bobby Aldridge to provide an update about the Downtown Business Association. Mr. Aldridge relayed that Pam Kelly has stepped down as Executive Director of the association, and Heather Sanders has been named to fill the position for a 2-year term. The First Tuesday events are in full swing, the first two have been well attended. Businesses have small signs to indicate that they are First Tuesday participants, and Mr. Aldridge indicated that they are seeking sponsors to fund trolley rides and Ferris wheel/carousel rides during First Tuesday events.

Noting his announcement at the March meeting of his intent to step down from the position, and after some reflective commentary, Mr. Griffin solicited nominations for the position of Chair of the CBID Commission. Mr. White nominated Bill Hanna to serve in that capacity, and Mr. Ghan seconded. There were no other nominations. Mr. Dingman noted that although he was absent, Mr. Hanna has indicated willingness to serve in that capacity if designated. Mr. Griffin asked for a vote to confirm the nominated Mr. Hanna as Chair, and such was confirmed by unanimous vote. The CBID Commission extended its thanks to Mr. Griffin for his tenure as chair, and recognized that Mr. Griffin will continue to serve his appointed term as a member of the CBID Commission.

The next meeting of the CBID Commission is scheduled for June 19, 2018. There being no additional business before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at approximately 10:14 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeff Dingman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. Below the signature is a horizontal line.

Jeff Dingman
Deputy City Administrator